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Toronto and Hudson's Bay Railway Commission

Toronto, March 7th, 1879.

GENTLEMEN,

In compliance with the request contained in the circular issued February 25th. by "The Toronto and Hudson's Bay Railway Commission," a copy of which was sent me a few days ago:

I may at once state that it will be a very difficult matter for me to add much more to what I have already and so often given to the public, broadcast-bearing on this important question referred to in your circular letter—through the medium of the newspapers, by pamphlets, letters, and through other channels; the information thus gained being almost wholly from actual observations, and not altogether hear-say evidence, in walking, canoeing, skinning lakes, crossing rivers, with and without snow-shoes, in summer and winter, between the Sault Ste. Marie to points far east of Manawa. Again, valuable and reliable information was obtained from various other sources (such as those of my many and esteemed friends in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and whose opinions I had reason to value very highly), from intelligent Indians and Half-breeds, from explorers, prospectors and others whose business necessitated their making frequent excursions into and all over this northern region; besides availing myself of all published literature and documents bearing on the country between the present line of the Canadian Pacific Railway and Hudson's Bay, all of which work consumed the best part of my time for the last sixteen years or more.

The information I can now give you must, therefore, necessarily be brief and of a cursory character; but what little additional is now submitted to the commission will be founded on honest con-

victions, totally unbiased and untrammelled, and from reliable sources, and which, I trust, will be of some service to your Secretary in the compilation of his reports.

With all this information now in my possession, and taking a totally impartial and broad view of the whole case, I am forced to come to the conclusion that within easy distance east and west of the eastern part of Lake Nipissing, the starting point for any railway projected to Hudson's Bay should be North Bay, and for various and obvious reasons, keeping always in view the interests of Toronto, Hamilton, and all cities and towns south of the C.P.R. or Lake Nipissing. This is the common-sense and natural route, and which line is *par excellence* a colonization road in every sense of the word, and as an absolute necessity must be built as speedily as possible, where there is such a large area of undeveloped country containing millions of acres of agricultural land equal to any in the province, practically lying fallow until this railway is constructed, the building of which in a word would mean the speedy settlement of every foot of arable land by hardy and prosperous settlers, making comfortable and happy homes for tens of thousands, and relieve the now comparatively congested districts in some of the older settlements; but no matter how fertile the earth may be, or how propitious the seasons, the settler or farmer can make no profits upon his labour unless he has a ready and reliable market for his produce, and this is impossible until a railway is built through this country, and which requires no argument to demonstrate.

Up to the present date there are already twenty-four townships laid out at the head of Lake Temiscaming, the land of which can hardly be excelled in many parts of Ontario; but the difficulty and expense for intending settlers, who at any time have no money to spare, deters them from making such a trip, preferring rather to wait and trust to chances until some means of penetrating the country is provided for them.

These twenty-four townships already mentioned contain 553,000 acres (over half a million), but the land is being gradually laid out each year by the Ontario Government. (See Provincial Land Surveyor Niven's Report as to the quality of the land in the Temiscaming district.)

As a matter of fact, the subsidy granted by the Local Government to the Nipissing and James' Bay Railway was granted with the

expectation that it would act as an impetus, and have the railway built through all the agricultural land along the line of this located railway.

Another very strong reason why North Bay should be the starting point is, that it obviates the necessity of building any other railway or extension of a railway to reach this zero point, as in fact the Nipissing and James' Bay Railway will be only a continuation of the Grand Trunk Railway System, which is known to be one of the *best constructed, best equipped and most direct railways* possible to be built through such a country. The G.T.R. thus giving a direct line all the way from Toronto to North Bay, thence on, in connection with the projected railway, to James' Bay. Seventy miles already have been *located*, ready for construction between North Bay and Lake Te-ma-ga-meeng, the alignment and gradients of which are laid out so as to conform to the same on the main line of the Grand Trunk Railway, and which will be continued in a similar manner to the end of the road.

Between North Bay and the country through to Lake Abitibi there are millions of dollars worth of red and white pine, besides other valuable merchantable timber, such as black birch, spruce, tamarack, etc., etc., very little of which, however, can be brought to any market until railway communication is established, on account of the many rocky and dangerous falls, shallow rapids, etc., etc., to remedy which, for the transport of the same by water, would entail an amount of money exceeding fifty times more than the construction of the present proposed railway; in fact, in some places it would be almost an impossibility to change the position of the waterways for the removal of timber or logs, but with railway facilities no trouble whatever would be experienced.

Thirty miles north of North Bay the mineral belt begins, improves as we go northward and continues on to Hudson's Bay. I was out last September and October with a party of nine, one of whom was an experienced mining engineer, and what we saw perfectly satisfied the whole of us. It would take too long, however, to go into all the details with reference to those minerals. This country has already been examined and reported upon by the Geological Department at Ottawa (which see).

As to the climate, as far north as Lake Abitibi, it is similar to, but no colder, than that at Ottawa.

The scenery cannot be excelled in any part of the Dominion. Lake Te-ma-ga-meeng being, to my mind, the most picturesque lake in this or any other country. This lake and all the other innumerable large and small ones, as well as the rivers, are teeming with fish of every description.

Game, large and small, is plentiful, including moose, cariboo, common red deer, etc.

No matter, therefore, how many lines may idly be talked of or wildly and recklessly projected by speculators and self-styled promoters and others, whose objects or intentions are as unknown to themselves as to the public,

THE NIPISSING AND JAMES' BAY RAILWAY

is one of the railways absolutely required to be built, and on the exact line located and projected, in the interest of all cities, towns and villages south of the Canadian Pacific Railway, extending east and west of Lake Nipissing.

Very little need be said of the traffic awaiting the construction of this railway, which is manifest and will be enormous both from freight and passengers, the former including timber of all kinds, minerals, railway ties, fish, stone-flagging, granite for building purposes, supplies for settlers and lumber men, also freight for the Hudson's Bay Company's Posts, etc.

The tourists alone, annually visiting this northern country, which is destined to rival Muskoka, with prospectors and others, will swell the receipts of the railway, and which will increase gradually each year, as the country becomes better known and gets filled up by intending settlers, and the employees in the saw mills, pulp mills, those engaged in mines, etc., all of which will be in full blast just so soon as the railway is finished.

It is a great pity that some of the numerous parties who have become so suddenly possessed with *cacæthes scribendi* in the patriotic idea of reaching Hudson's Bay mainly through a lot of irrelevant correspondence in the newspapers of this city, did not act more disingenuously in the premises, by first obtaining reliable and actual facts in connection with the districts traversed by all the projected railways, whether real or imaginary, from disinterested and competent men who could furnish them with the same.

The tactics adopted by some of these writers and would-be railway magnates cannot possibly do themselves any good, but will tend to act injuriously on the whole country, in that their statements, many times, are altogether miles away from anything like the truth, and at variance with the already published reports and facts by the Government and well-known and disinterested private individuals—which, as a consequence, will create doubts in the minds of those who would be otherwise useful and friendly in the promotion of the enterprise: The only excuse I can offer for such amateur “journalists,” is that, in all probability, few of them have ever been farther north than the Muskoka District, and then only on a fishing tour, so that the knowledge gained by such parties would be worthless.

As already intimated from my years of experience in this northern region, in exploring, surveying, locating, constructing railways, etc., etc., much more might be said on the present and all-absorbing topic at issue, particularly with reference to the enormous forest and *economic* mineral wealth, right through to Hudson's Bay, a great deal of which is within easy access of one of the *already* projected railways; the writer of this, however, does not deem it prudent, or within the bounds of justice to himself, to hand over any further information, other than what is now contained in these pages, without infringing on his own personal rights, professionally.

Yours respectfully,

J. C. BAILEY, CIVIL ENGINEER,
*Chief Engineer and Promoter of the Nipissing
 and James' Bay Railway.*

HUDSON'S BAY AND STRAIT.

The Hudson's Bay is a great inland sea extending between the 51st and 63rd degrees of north latitude, and is about 1,000 miles in length by 600 in width, having an area of about 500,000 square miles. It drains an extent of country about 2,100 miles from east to west, and 1,500 miles from north to south, or an area of 3,000,000 square miles.

The southern end of James' Bay is in the same latitude as the south of England, so that seven degrees length, at least, of the Bay is in like latitude as from the English Channel to the North of Scotland.

The average depth of the Bay is about seventy fathoms according to Chappelle, who made extensive soundings; this depth is evenly distributed, and there is a singular freedom from shoals or dangerous reefs, and the approach to the west shore shows a level, sandy bottom. . . .

James' Bay begins at Cape Jones on the east side, and Cape Henrietta Maria on the west, and runs south about 360 miles, with an average breadth of about 150 miles. The Bay is named after Capt. James, who wintered there in 1632. . . .

Hudson's Strait is about 500 miles in length, and varies from 45 miles to 150 miles in breadth, having an average of about 100 miles.

Letter of Charles Horetzky, lately in the Hudson's Bay Company's service, to Col. Dennis, 4th of Nov., 1878:

"In regard to the country for agriculture, the country that I have spoken of, south and south-west of James' Bay, lies in the latitude of Cornwall and Devonshire, in England, and southward of that; it is the same latitude as the northerly parts of France; and while these countries enjoy exceptionally favourable conditions, there is no peculiarity of climate that would make the district I have referred to worse than the average of the face of the earth in those latitudes, and therefore I think it is likely to be of value for agriculture, as far as climate is concerned."

The temperature below the immediate surface of Lake Superior is 39° Fahr.; along the east shore of Hudson's Bay it averaged 53° in the summer months.

What is the liability to summer frosts in the country around Hudson's Bay? In the larger area of agricultural land south and south-west of James' Bay, I think not very great. In 1877, on my homeward journey, I left Moose Factory on the 1st October, and at that time all the tender plants,—tobacco plants, castor oil beans, common beans, cucumbers, balsams and other tender plants,—were perfectly green, standing in the open air; and probably remained so for some time after I left, as we had no frost. And at the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, inland, they are not often troubled with early autumn frosts.

How about late frosts in the spring? No late frosts in the spring. I think sowing is done, on an average, at the same time as in corresponding latitudes in Lower Canada. I have spoken of the southern region. Further to the north-west, at Norway House,

in 1879, they had a frost in the latter part of September, which blighted the tender plants, and it was remarked as the first that had occurred there in thirty years. Wheat ripens perfectly every year in that region.

Where is that? About twenty miles down the Nelson River from the north end of Lake Winnipeg. The climate, there, I think, is as good as in Manitoba, on account of certain favourable conditions.

Prof. Bell says: "Moose Factory enjoys the most favourable climate on the Bay. You are away from the influence of the open sea. James' Bay is far south and comparatively narrow, and the water is warmer than at York Factory.

For further information on this whole subject, see pamphlets and books by the following writers:

Pamphlet compiled and written by J. C. Bailey.

" "Hudson Bay," by C. Baillairge, Quebec.

" "Transactions of the Geographical Society of Quebec."

"North West," by Fox, 1635.

J. B. Nevin's Voyage to Hudson's Bay, 1847.

Hinds' Report on Hudson's Bay, 1878.

History of Manitoba, Donald Gunn, 1880.

Ontario Boundary Papers, 1882.

Captain Gordon's Trip to Hudson's Bay.

Geological Reports, Dominion Government, 1879 to 1884,

and many others.—J. C. B.

NOTE.—The information to be gained from a perusal of a great many of the books and pamphlets given above will be mainly historical in character, giving merely a superficial description of the country traversed; hence will, in a very small measure, throw sufficient light on, or assist in, the compilation of any report to arrive at just and accurate conclusions, or give the comparative merits or demerits of any of the many lines now projected (on paper), partaking more of an engineering problem than anything else, and which can only be done by walking carefully and intelligently over the ground in all directions in the neighborhood of each of the several sections, giving, at least, some of the engineering characteristics of the route to be considered—in fact, making a thorough reconnaissance of the whole country; which work, necessarily, will consume months in time, as well as a great deal of money; and in this, and in no other manner, can the absolutely desired ends satisfactorily be accomplished, to the contrary notwithstanding what others may do, write or think about it.

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